

## **Analysis of Carbon and Low Alloy Steel Samples by Spark Discharge in Argon Optical Emission Spectroscopy (SDAR-OES)**

### **1 Introduction**

The concentrations of selected elements in steel objects can serve to chemically characterize the source of the steel. The concentrations of the elements intentionally added to steel are controlled by manufacturers to impart the specific metallurgical properties required for a given product. Intentionally added elements are commonly specified to fall within a specific concentration range for a given alloy. Other elements are specified at maximum levels which the manufacturer may not exceed but which otherwise may vary considerably. Such variations in the elemental concentrations provide a means of differentiating among steels made by different manufacturers and for distinguishing among specific production runs made by a single manufacturer.

### **2 Scope**

This document applies to personnel using the associated instrument(s)/equipment in the following disciplines/categories of testing: general physical and chemical analysis in support of metallurgy examinations. This procedure determines the concentrations of several elements, if present above the limits of quantitation (LOQ), in carbon and low alloy steels. These elements include C, Si, Mn, S, P, Cr, Mo, Al, Ni, Co, Cu, Nb, Ti, V, Sn, As, Zr, Sb, Ta, B, and N. Extension of the procedure to other elements is possible if additional validation is completed. Operation of the SDAR-OES instrument will follow procedures defined in the current revision of Chemistry Unit (CU) Metallurgy standard operating procedure (SOP) *Compositional Analysis by Spark Discharge in Argon Optical Emission Spectroscopy (SDAR-OES)* and the specific parameters described below.

### **3 Principle**

Compositional analysis of steel alloys by SDAR-OES requires using the pre-determined spark sequence to generate characteristic light emissions from the elements present in the sample. Quantitative determination of individual elemental concentrations is achieved by comparison of measured emission intensities to the manufacturer-determined calibration curves resident on the instrument's computer system. The analysis is verified by demonstrating adequate performance on certified reference materials (CRMs) with similar composition to the evidentiary items.

## 4 Specimens

This procedure can be used for the analysis of plain carbon and low alloy steel sheets, plates, bars, pipes and any other object having sufficiently large physical dimensions. Generally, samples must be large enough to cover the 13mm diameter analysis area to permit their examination by the method outlined here. Any sample which completely covers the opening in the plasma source stand plate is of adequate size.

## 5 Equipment/Materials/Reagents

- a. SpectroLab LAV M10 spectrometer
- b. Spectro RH 18/30 optic re-profiling standard
- c. Spectro standardization samples RE 12/80, RN 19/24, and BS XCCS
- d. 60 - 120 grit zirconia grinding paper dedicated for steel OES preparation
- e. Bench grinder or other metallurgical grinder
- f. High purity argon
- g. One or more steel CRMs
- h. Spark stand insert (waveguide), tungsten carbide electrode and wire brush dedicated to steel alloys
- i. Vacuum cleaner with precision nozzle attachment
- j. Lint-free wipes

## 6 Standards and Controls

A re-profiling standard is provided by the instrument manufacturer. The standardization samples used in this procedure are specific to the steel alloy class and are specified in 5 Equipment/Materials/Reagents. Appropriate CRMs are selected by the operator to demonstrate adequate performance of the SDAR-OES instrument.

## 7 Sampling

If large numbers of physically indistinguishable samples are received for compositional analysis, a sampling plan may be employed for testing. If the sampling plan will be used to make an inference about the population, then the plan will be based on a statistically valid approach. All of the samples may be tested at the examiner's discretion. Any sampling plan and corresponding procedure used will be recorded in case notes.

## 8 Procedure

### 8.1 Prepare Samples

Specimens measured by SDAR-OES must be flat and debris-free over the entire analysis region. Re-profiling, standardizing and CRM materials may require surface preparation before testing. This is accomplished by dry grinding on 60 – 120 grit zirconium oxide abrasive paper dedicated for steel use.

### 8.2 Perform Analysis

Steel analysis uses the “Fe-10 method” that resides on the SpectroLab LAV M10 spectrometer. Follow the procedures detailed in *Compositional Analysis by Spark Discharge in Argon Optical Emission Spectroscopy (SDAR-OES)* to clean, re-profile, and standardize the instrument using the appropriate stage and standardization samples. Select CRMs that contain concentrations of elements of interest that appropriately bound the concentrations present in evidentiary samples.

## 9 Instrumental Conditions

The instrumental conditions are set by the instrument manufacturer and are not normally changed or modified by FBI Laboratory personnel.

## 10 Decision Criteria

In general, it is expected that the mean concentration values determined by the instrument on a given CRM will be within the range of values indicated on the certificate of analysis. If a measured element fails to give adequate agreement with the CRM, the instrument can either be re-standardized to improve the agreement or, if the value is not critical, it may be regarded as semi-quantitative.

The process used to compare data from samples thought to share a common origin is detailed in *Compositional Analysis by Spark Discharge in Argon Optical Emission Spectroscopy (SDAR-OES)*.

## 11 Calculations

### 11.1 Quantitative Analysis

The measured emission intensity of each element of interest is compared to the emission intensity of a selected matrix line and the system calibration curves. This data is used to determine the weight percentage of each of the elements present. Quantitation of the data is performed automatically by the system program and is not directly controlled by the user.

### 11.2 Comparative Analysis

Where quantitative data from two specimens are being compared, a pooled, two-tailed, Student's t-test statistic of the sample means is typically used for the comparison, as described in *Compositional Analysis by Spark Discharge in Argon Optical Emission Spectroscopy (SDAR-OES)*.

## 12 Measurement Uncertainty

Quantitative data from this procedure are generally used for comparative purposes. Expanded uncertainty should not be used for these inter-comparisons because it increases the probability two samples will appear to be analytically indistinguishable and therefore increases the likelihood of type II errors (false inclusion). In the event that it is necessary to calculate the expanded uncertainty of a measurement, it will be done in accord with the *Chemistry Unit Procedures for Estimating Measurement Uncertainty*.

## 13 Limitations

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Wear safety glasses when machining samples and cleaning and operating the SDAR-OES instrument to prevent eye injury. Additionally, wear lab coat and gloves when cleaning the instrument and changing the air filter.

## 15 References

Thomsen, V. B. E, *Modern Spectrochemical Analysis of Metals - An Introduction for Users of*

*Arc/Spark Instrumentation*, ASM International 1996

Slickers, K., *Automatic Atomic-Emission-Spectroscopy, 2nd Ed.*, Bruhlsche  
Universitätsdruckerei, Germany 1993

Milton, J. S. and Arnold, J. C., *Introduction to Probability and Statistics - Principles and  
Applications for Engineering and Computer Sciences, Fourth Edition*, McGraw-Hill Higher  
Education 2003

*Chemistry Unit Quality Assurance and Operations Manual*, Federal Bureau of Investigation,  
Laboratory Division, latest revision

*FBI Laboratory Operations Manual*, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Laboratory Division, latest  
revision

*FBI Laboratory Quality Assurance Manual*, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Laboratory  
Division, latest revision

*Compositional Analysis by Spark Discharge in Argon Optical Emission Spectroscopy (SDAR-  
OES)*, Metallurgy Manual 400, Chemistry Unit, most recent revision

Rev. #	Issue Date	History
6	04/24/14	Minor grammatical changes in sections 12 and 15. Formula used for calculating sample variance in section 13.2 has been simplified. Section 14 has been rewritten to reflect updated measurement uncertainty requirements. References updated.
7	03/02/18	Renumbered Metallurgy SOP Manual documents. This document was formerly Metal 8 and is now designated Metal 401. Removed information that has been relocated to Metal 400: <i>Compositional Analysis by Spark Discharge in Argon Optical Emission Spectroscopy (SDAR-OES)</i> throughout, renumbered sections and designated dependence on this document. Added personnel to section 2. Made minor editorial corrections throughout document. Added requirement for sampling plan retention in section 7. Added CRM verification in section 3.. Changed units in LOQ table in section 13. Augmented section 14. Added additional references to section 15.

### **Approval**

Redacted - Signatures on File

Metallurgy Technical Leader

Date: 02/28/2018

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Date: 02/28/2018

### **QA Approval**

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